

Phone Firm Eavesdrops On Employees

The telephone company is literally bugging its employees to be "friendly, courteous and sympathetic" to customers.

Using "bugged" calendars and desk organizers, supervisory personnel at Chesapeake and Potomac and other local telephone companies eavesdrop on conversations between employees and subscribers.

This was revealed by Joseph A. Berne, president of Communications Workers of America, at a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on invasions of privacy through electronic monitoring.

Berne testified Wednesday that CWA officials are "deeply concerned about the dangers to individual freedom which are inherent in the tools and techniques of the spy" and about "spying on the men and women we represent."

He said some phone company employees had been disciplined and even dismissed as a result of the secret surveillance.

Chesapeake and Potomac has never used a monitored conversation as grounds for discharging an employee, a spokesman for the company said yesterday.

Chesapeake and Potomac monitors conversations only in its main office at 725 13th st. nw, not in suburban branches, he added.